

101-year-old bottle message

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

lob	curator	indecipherable	legible	incur
joy	moved	genealogical	maritime	catch

- If you _____ something, you throw it so that it goes high into the air.
- A _____ researcher studies the history of families by using documents to discover the relationships between people.
- _____ means *related to ships or the business of moving people and goods by sea*.
- A _____ is an amount of fish that has been caught.
- A _____ is someone whose job is to look after the objects in a museum.
- If something is _____, it is impossible to read.
- If something is _____, you are able to read it.
- If you _____ costs or expenses, you have to pay money as a result of doing something.
- If you feel _____, you feel sad or serious because something has affected you emotionally.
- _____ is a feeling of great happiness.

2 Correct the information

These statements all contain one factual error. Read the text and correct the errors.

- Angela Erdmann lives in Hamburg.
- Her grandfather was born in 1882.
- He died six years after she was born.
- He put a message in a wine bottle and threw it into the sea.
- This happened in 1913, when he was on a cycling trip.
- The message will be on display at the Hamburg History Museum.

101-year-old bottle message

Level 3 • Advanced

101-year-old bottle message: Baltic find reveals my roots, says granddaughter

Berlin resident Angela Erdmann speaks of unknown grandfather who threw bottle but died six years before she was born

Louise Osborne in Berlin

8 April, 2014

- 1 Angela Erdmann never knew her grandfather. He died in 1946, six years before she was born. But, on Tuesday 8th April, 2014, she described the extraordinary moment when she received a message in a bottle, 101 years after he had lobbed it into the Baltic Sea. Thought to be the world's oldest message in a bottle, it was presented to Erdmann by the museum that is now exhibiting it in Germany.
- 2 "It was very surprising," Erdmann, 62, said, recalling how she found out about the bottle. "A man stood at my door and told me he had post from my grandfather. He then told me that a message in a bottle had been found and that the name that was on the card was that of my grandfather." Her visitor was a genealogical researcher who had managed to track her down in Berlin after the letter was given to the International Maritime Museum in the northern port city of Hamburg.
- 3 The brown beer bottle, which had been in the water for 101 years, was found in the catch of Konrad Fischer, a fisherman, who had been out in the Baltic Sea off the northern city of Kiel. Holger von Neuhoff, curator for ocean and science at the museum, said this bottled message was the oldest he had come across. "There are documents that have been found without the bottle that are older and are in the museum," he said. "But, with the bottle and the document, this is certainly the oldest at the moment. It is in extremely good condition."
- 4 Researchers believe Erdmann's grandfather, Richard Platz, threw the bottle in the sea while on a hike with a nature appreciation group in 1913. He was 20 years old at the time.
- 5 Much of the postcard was indecipherable, although the address in Berlin on the front of the card was legible, as was the author's polite request that the note be sent by the finder to his home address.
- 6 "He also included two stamps from that time that were also in the bottle, so the finder would not incur a cost," Erdmann said. "But he did not think it would take 101 years."
- 7 She said she was moved by the arrival of the message, although she had not known her grandfather because he died, at the age of 54, six years before she was born.
- 8 "I knew very little about my grandfather, but I found out that he was a writer who was very open-minded, and believed in freedom and that everyone should respect each other," she said. "He did a lot for the young and later travelled with his wife and two daughters. It was wonderful because I could see where my roots came from."
- 9 Like her grandfather, Erdmann said, she also liked culture and travelling around the world. She described herself as open-minded, too. "What he taught his two daughters, my mother taught me and I have then given to my sons," she said. Despite her joy at receiving the bottled message, she said that she hoped others would not repeat what her grandfather had done and throw bottles with messages into the sea. "Today, the sea is so full of so many bottles and rubbish that more shouldn't be thrown in there," she said.
- 10 The message and the bottle will be on display at Hamburg's Maritime Museum until the beginning of May 2014, after which experts will attempt to decipher the rest of the text. It is not clear what will then happen to the bottle, but Erdmann hopes it will stay at the museum.
- 11 "We want to make a few photos available to put with the bottle and give it a face, so visitors can see the young man who threw the bottle into the water," she said.

© Guardian News and Media 2014

First published in *The Guardian*, 08/04/14

101-year-old bottle message

Level 3 • Advanced

3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- Who told Angela Erdmann about the bottle?
 - a museum curator
 - a postman
 - a genealogical researcher
- Who was her grandfather with when he threw the bottle into the sea?
 - a group of people who loved nature
 - a group of hiking enthusiasts
 - a group of fishermen
- What characteristic did Angela Erdmann say she had inherited from her grandfather?
 - an appreciation of the environment
 - open-mindedness
 - her belief in freedom and respect for others
- Why doesn't Angela Erdmann want others to repeat what her grandfather did?
 - because the bottles may never be found
 - because there is already a lot of rubbish in the sea
 - because it will take another 101 years to find the bottles

4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

- a verb meaning *put something interesting in a museum or other public place so that people can go and look at it* (para 1)
- a two-word phrasal verb meaning *find someone or something after a long search* (para 2)
- a two-word phrasal verb meaning *find something by chance* (para 3)
- a noun meaning *a long walk in the countryside* (para 4)
- a two-word adjectival phrase meaning *willing to consider new ideas* (para 8)
- a noun in the plural meaning *a person's origins or background* (para 8)
- a two-word phrase meaning *in a place that is able to be seen by many people* (para 10)
- a verb meaning *succeed in reading writing that is unclear or untidy* (para 10)

101-year-old bottle message

Level 3 • Advanced

5 -er or -or

Complete these words by adding -er or -or.

1. auth____
2. research____
3. curat____
4. find____
5. visit____
6. hik____

6 Word-building

Fill the gaps in the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

1. The bottle was found by a _____. [FISH]
2. The bottle is in an _____ good condition. [EXTREME]
3. Her grandfather was hiking with a nature _____ group. [APPRECIATE]
4. She said she was moved by the _____ of the message. [ARRIVE]
5. Much of the postcard was _____. [DECIPHER]
6. She described the moment she received the message as _____. [ORDINARY]

7 Discussion

What do you think Richard Platz wrote in his message in a bottle?

101-year-old bottle message

Level 3 • Advanced

KEY

1 Key words

1. lob
2. genealogical
3. maritime
4. catch
5. curator
6. indecipherable
7. legible
8. incur
9. moved
10. joy

2 Correct the information

1. Angela Erdmann lives in **Berlin**.
2. Her grandfather was born in **1892**.
3. He died six years **before** she was born.
4. He put a message in a **beer** bottle and threw it into the sea.
5. This happened in 1913, when he was on a **hiking** trip.
6. The message will be on display at the Hamburg **Maritime** Museum.

3 Comprehension check

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. b

4 Find the word

1. exhibit
2. track down
3. come across
4. hike
5. open-minded
6. roots
7. on display
8. decipher

5 -er or -or

1. -or
2. -er
3. -or
4. -er
5. -or
6. -er

6 Word-building

1. fisherman
2. extremely
3. appreciation
4. arrival
5. indecipherable
6. extraordinary